226 far the poison has progressed. As soon as the muddy water reaches them, the men begin beating the bundles of poison-vine on rocks, dipping them in the water from time to time, so that the juice runs into the stream, which it turns slightly milky. The women and small boys stand below and follow the poison down the stream, scooping out the fish with nets (iruí) or with their hands. When the men can be spared from the beating, they join the women and gather fish also to some extent, but more as an amusement, sometimes quite unnec- [462] essarily shooting them with arrows. As a task, the gathering is assigned to the women. New doses of poison may be beaten into the water at lower points, especially in the larger pools, if needed.

The effect of the poison becomes attenuated quickly, even a large quantity of strong poison having little or no effect a kilometer below the point where fishing is started. A few fish are killed outright, but most of them are only incapacitated, swimming in circles and belly-up, and if they are not gathered those less heavily poisoned seem to recover after a time. The poison has abso- [277] lutely no effect on humans. The Indians wade and swim in heavily poisoned water and even drink it.[120] Our own water supply was poisoned while we were in camp and no one felt the slightest ill effect.

226 185 The practice of poisoning fish has been bitterly attacked as shockingly wasteful and as exterminating the fish. My impression is that it is not wasteful and does not lead to extermination. Indeed the latter charge is absurd when one considers that the Indians have been poisoning these streams for centuries, perhaps for thousands of years, and that fish are still abundant in them. The poison does not, as has been supposed, sterilize the stream and the short section over which all the fish are removed at any one fishing is quickly repopulated from above and below. It is true that large fish have become uncommon here, partly because the larger and rarer fish are killed off not with poison but with arrows and hooks, and partly because constant fishing prevents any individual's reaching a considerable age although it does give ample time for breeding. As for wastefulness, it must be a rare fish, indeed, that is poisoned but not gathered and eaten. Even the tiniest fish are carefully saved. Those that are lightly poisoned and escape by swimming do not appear to be permanently harmed.

226 [527] A fish-poisoning is also a great social occasion and the stream rings with laughter and chatter — a happy event that leaves no headache as do other Indian social occasions.

[252] [262] [251] Many of the fish gathered are immediately stewed and eaten. Any surplus is sun-dried and saved for the future.

Food Preparation.

252 The Kamarakotos cook all the food that we would ordinarily cook. They do not eat raw meat, fish, or vegetables and very little is eaten raw except

120 [see footnote on p. 321 category 116 - Analyst]

[text continues on p. 137]

226 them would be useful and interesting. Even Roth's excellent summary leaves
824 innumerable doubtful points.
114

226 120. The supposed danger from poisoned water in this part of South
271 America is thus a figment of the imagination, even more absurd than the danger of attack with blowguns.

252 121. It is almost universally stated that this juice is a deadly poison and
263 that the purpose of squeezing it out is to remove the poison from the grated casave. These statements are misleading. The poison would surely lose its force when the flour was cooked in any case so the pressing is not to remove the poison but merely to obtain a drier flour from which bread can be made. The "deadly poisonous" juice is consumed in enormous amounts by the Indians with no ill effects and is their favorite and most common condiment, rivaled only by peppers. It is always boiled down first, however, and this doubtless destroys any poisonous qualities, whatever they may be.

263 122. One or two of the more sophisticated Indians who have seen the
177 crude Venezuelan sugar-loaves, papelón, have attempted to imitate them, but this sporadic effort has, as yet, no significance.

177 123. An amusing instance is provided by a Taurepán who attempted to
401 devise an imitation of the roll-mill introduced by the missionaries at Santa
407 Elena. He showed us his "invention" with glowing pride, but ruefully confessed that it would not work, as could have been told beforehand by anyone who had grasped the mechanical principles involved.

276 124. During our stay native habits were disrupted in this respect by the
123 fact that a large stock of cigarettes was used for presents and wages, but I have
124 the impression that smoking, however extensive, is not very intensive, that no one smokes constantly or to excess.

412 125. Which axes, however, may have been used more for such purposes as digging than for cutting.

323 126. When I asked whether pots are ever painted, it was patiently ex-
531 plained that to do so would be ridiculous since the design would be hidden by
415 soot the first time the pot was used. Pots are used only for cooking, calabashes and baskets being used for all the other purposes for which some Indians use pottery.